



Yeadon Junior School

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Approved by: Governing Body

Date: March 2026

Last reviewed on: March 2026

Next review due by: March 2027

Rationale

We believe passionately that a great education is one of the most precious gifts a child can receive. We want our children to enjoy their learning and we achieve this in an environment which fosters the character virtues we hold dear: Resilience, Integrity, Teamwork, Curiosity and Reflection.

Underpinning all we do is a belief that every moment a child is in school must be used effectively. If time is wasted, it is lost forever and cannot be given back. Therefore, our structures and policies are designed to maximise learning and unlock potential.

We believe that regular attendance at school is crucial in ensuring that every pupil can reach their full potential. Good attendance helps to build good habits of reliability and timekeeping needed for future study and employment. We want all pupils to make the most of school by attending regularly, enjoying and achieving.

Our aim is to unlock every child's potential academically, physically, emotionally and socially in order to build a strong foundation for the future. Term times are for education. This is the priority.

We listen to our pupils who are able to reflect on why attendance is important:

'The more I am in school the more I am learning'

'Attendance is important as I need knowledge and skills to fulfil my dreams in the future'

'I get to be with my friends and have fun'

'My education sets me up for a bright future'

Regular attendance at school is vital. Without it, the learning process becomes fragmented.

We asked pupils what the impact of absence is:

'I feel like I am behind others in my class and it can make me feel like not a part of the class'

'It can limit my success when I am older'

'Being absent means I get confused about what is happening'

'We can miss out on important events and let our team down'

We aim to create an ethos in which high levels of attendance and punctuality are recognised and valued across our whole school community.

This policy is written with the above information in mind and underpins our school mission to:

- Keep everyone safe
- Create a culture and curriculum where we aim for excellence and learning thrives through nurture, encouragement and support
- Inspire and empower every individual to achieve their potential
- Ensure the children and their families know that we care
- Promote mental and physical health
- Provide opportunities that drive development

Aims

Our attendance policy aims to:

- support pupils and their parent(s) in the establishment of the highest possible levels of attendance and punctuality
- ensure that all pupils have full and equal access to the best education that we can offer in order to increase learning
- enable pupils to progress smoothly, confidently and with continuity through the school
- ensure parent(s) are aware of their legal responsibility to ensure their child attends WCPS regularly and punctually as stated under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996

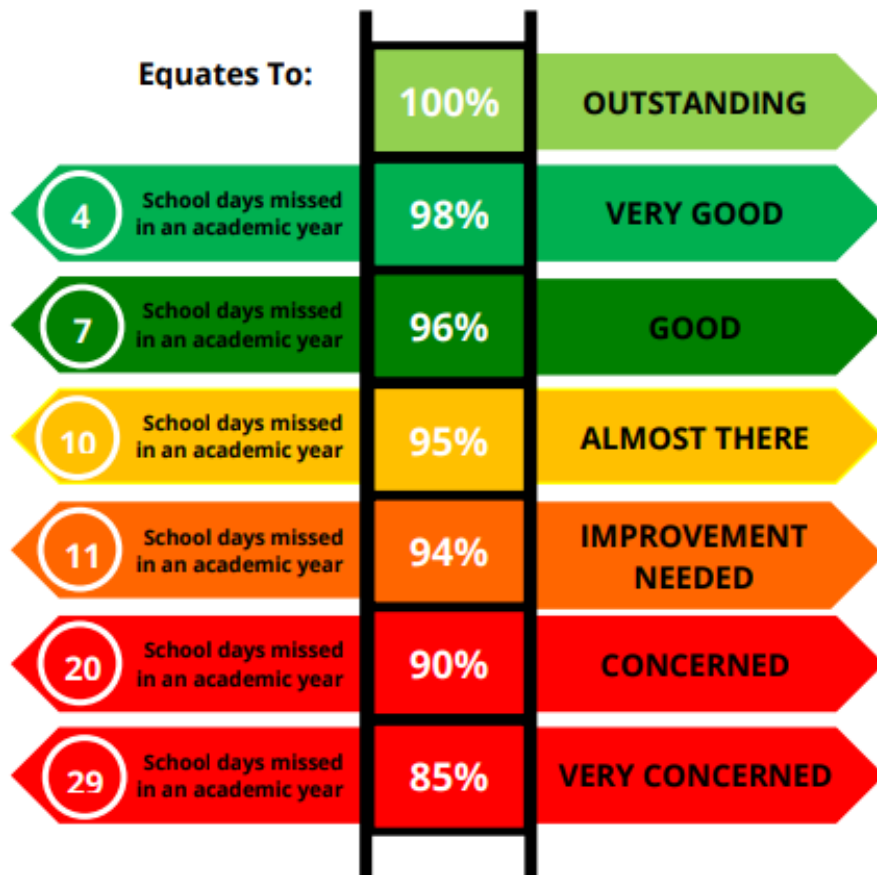
School attendance is subject to various education laws and legislation and this school attendance policy is written to reflect these laws and guidance produced by the Department for Education. This policy will contain within it the procedures that the school will use to meet its attendance targets.

The following guidance has been taken into consideration when developing this policy:
Working Together to Improve School Attendance (August 2024)

Expectations

We expect that all parents will:

- Ensure regular attendance and be aware of their legal responsibilities.
- Ensure their child arrives at school prepared for the school day, punctually for registration. Lateness is monitored and may be recorded as an unauthorised absence.
- Inform the school of any illness. Parents may on occasion be asked to provide evidence in relation to the absence in order for the absence to be authorised.
- Inform the school in advance of any medical appointments during school time. Parents may on occasion be asked to provide supporting information from the hospital, doctor or dentist, such as appointment details card/letter/text message, in relation to the absence in order for the absence to be authorised. A period of absence will only be authorised in relation to the length of the appointment. There is an expectation that a child will be in school for registration before an appointment or return to school after the appointment, depending on when the appointment falls within the school day and the health of the child. Where possible medical appointments should be arranged outside of school hours.
- Inform the school on the first and every subsequent day of absence and before registers close at 9.00am, if their child is unable to attend school citing the reason for absence.
- Inform the school as soon as possible about any child's reluctance to come to school so that any problems can be quickly identified and dealt with by our Inclusion team.
- Follow application procedures regarding a request for leave of absence during term time, which should only be taken if absolutely necessary. Leave is not automatically authorised unless considered an exceptional circumstance. Any leave taken during term time that has been unauthorised could be subject to a Penalty Notice/fine.
- Notify school immediately of any changes to contact details and ensure school has more than one name, address and telephone number as an emergency contact.
- Engage with early interventions designed to support the family and their child's attendance at school.
- Download the Arbor App in order to monitor school attendance
- Discuss attendance where necessary face to face or on the telephone – conversations are preferable to emails.



We expect that school will:

- Provide a safe, learning environment.
- Keep regular and accurate records of attendance and punctuality.
- Monitor individual children’s attendance and punctuality.
- Contact parents when a child fails to attend and where no message has been received to explain the absence.
- Follow up all unexpected absence to obtain explanations from parents. Although parents may offer a reason, only the school can authorise the absence. In the case of long term or frequent absence due to medical conditions, information from a doctor or other relevant body may be requested to assist school in offering appropriate support.
- Promote and celebrate good attendance and punctuality for example through assemblies and parental communications.
- Meet regularly with the Local Authority Attendance Support Officer to monitor and support school attendance and punctuality.
- Refer irregular or unjustified patterns of attendance to the Local Authority Attendance Service.
- Provide bespoke support to children at risk of persistent absence.
- Work alongside other services and teams to support children’s attendance e.g. other schools, the Local Authority, Early Help, Social Care, Virtual School and the local community (including volunteers).
- Share attendance data with parents/carers and make it clear what good attendance and success looks like for their child.
- Communicate clearly and consistently with parents/carers and children regarding attendance.
- Implement the behaviour policy and strategy fairly and consistently
- Follow the Local Authority Medical Needs Policy for children who are failing to access education in school due to medical and behavioural needs. This goes hand in hand with Section 19 of the Education Act 1996.

We expect that all children will:

- Attend school every day.

- Attend school punctually.
- Attend appropriately prepared for the day.
- Discuss promptly with their class teacher any problems that may affect their school attendance.

We expect that governors will:

- Monitor attendance figures for the whole school on at least a termly basis.
- Hold the headTeacher to account for the implementation of this policy.

Absence Procedures

If a child is absent from school the parent/carer must follow the following procedures:

- Contact the school on the first day of absence before 8.35am. The school has an answer phone available to leave a message if nobody is available to take your call, or call into school personally and speak to the office staff
- Contact the school on every further day of absence, again before 8.35am. It is vital parents keep in touch by telephone, letter or email, if a child is away from school.
- Ensure that your child returns to school as soon as possible and you provide any medical evidence if requested to support the absence.
- tell us about any planned absences in advance. Only request leave of absence if it is for an exceptional circumstance. Complete the leave of absence form which can be found on the attendance page of the school website.
- Every half-day absence must be labelled by the school as either ‘authorised’ or ‘unauthorised’:

If your child is absent we will:

- Telephone or text you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you however it is your responsibility to contact us
- Write to you if your child’s attendance is below 96%
- Invite you in to school to discuss the situation
- Refer the matter to the Local Authority Attendance Support Team for relevant sanctions if attendance deteriorates following the above actions

Holidays taken during term time without leave, not deemed ‘for exceptional purposes’ by the headteacher may result in school applying to the local authority to issue a penalty notice or if you have previously been issued a Penalty Notice, the school may request a direct prosecution by the local authority.

Actions for low attendance

Not coming to school is a serious concern. However, each case is different and the school knows that there is no standard response. The school has an attendance strategy which can be applied to support the individual child/family in improving attendance. Consideration is given to all factors affecting attendance before deciding what intervention strategies to use.

In every case, early intervention is needed to prevent the problem from worsening. It is essential that parents keep the school fully informed of any matters that may affect their child’s attendance.

Prior to the engagement of the Attendance Support Team, the school will issue letters to parents clearly defining the concerns within school regarding a pupil’s absence. It also set up a parent meeting to discuss the pupil’s absence. It is hoped that a quick response and change in levels of absence will prevent the need for ESW involvement. Please see the flowchart in appendix 2 outlining the process the school will follow.

Attendance levels

Attendance levels show our expectations and what happens next:

- 97%+, expected attendance. This will help all aspects of a child's achievement and life in school. This will give them a good start in life and supports a positive work ethic.
- 97-91%, below expected attendance. As attendance falls, our concern increases. We follow our stepped approach to take action.
- 90% or lower, persistent absence. Absence is causing serious concern. It is highly likely to affect attainment and progress and is disruptive to the child's learning. Meetings between home and school to share strategies for improvement will be called. A Fixed Penalty Notice will be considered where absence is not authorised.
- 50% or lower is defined as severe absence. In instances where severe absence is identified the Local Authority Educational Neglect Policy will be applied.

For all children, we have a stepped approach to taking action. It will not always be appropriate to progress through all of these steps or even to carry them out in the order listed.

- staff will use discretion and consider each case carefully
- where there has been no contact from parents, we will initiate first day calling for all pupils
- for pupils with attendance below 90% there will be a discussion with the Local Authority Attendance Support Officer at our regular termly meeting
- we will monitor trends in pupil attendance and punctuality, including our vulnerable groups;
- we will request for parent/carer to meet school staff
- if appropriate, will initiate procedures to access support from other agencies.

Actions may include:

- home visits,
- multi agency meetings,
- issuing a parenting contract,
- sign posting to supportive agencies,
- issue a Fixed Penalty Notice,
- court action for poor attendance

A pupil is defined by the Government as a '**persistent absentee**' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason. Absence at this level will cause considerable damage to any child's education and we need a parent/carer's fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

We monitor all absence, and the reasons that are given, thoroughly. If a child is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark we will inform the parent/carer. PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully. We also combine this with academic tracking where absence affects attainment. All our PA pupils and their parents are subject to a school-based meeting and the plan may include: allocation of additional support through the School Nurse, Attendance Officer, Home School Liaison Worker, Local Authority Attendance Support Team, Stronger Families Key Worker or Social Care. We may also use circle time, individual incentive schemes, individual targets and participation in group activities to support us in raising attendance.

Should the irregular attendance continue the Attendance Lead will contact the Attendance Support team, discuss the matter, and agree a course of action.

Lateness and attendance are monitored daily by the school attendance lead who will:

- Scrutinise the registers daily, monitoring authorised/unauthorised absence and other reasons provided for pupil absence and lateness, before completing the register in accordance with the correct use of regulation attendance codes.

- Once the registers have closed, ring the contacts of any pupil not present for an unknown reason, starting with priority 1, to establish a reason. Leave voicemail messages, if possible, requesting parents to contact the school regarding their child(ren)'s absence. Use text/email messages if appropriate.
- Log the outcomes of any communications as a comment on the register. If there is no response it may be necessary for staff to visit the home and carry out a welfare check in order to ascertain the whereabouts of the child(ren) and establish their safety and wellbeing. If there is no response at a home visit a slip indicating the visit will be left requesting information on the absence. No response to an enquiry regarding a child's absence by the end of the school day will be considered unexplained and will be recorded as unauthorised, with continued investigations ongoing until the reason for absence is known. This must not be later than 5 days after the session.

Attendance and lateness will be reviewed regularly and concerns will be raised with parent(s) once attendance has fallen below an unacceptable level. After an initial letter (LA) acknowledging reduced attendance through illness, if felt applicable, an early intervention process is initiated. A LA letter is sent to both parents jointly, if applicable.

Whilst any child may occasionally have time off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child. If a parent thinks their child is reluctant to attend school then we will work with that family to understand the root problem and provide any necessary support.

Understanding types of absence

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parent/carer), as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required, preferably in writing. An email from a known address is acceptable.

Authorised absences are morning or afternoon sessions away from school for a genuine reason such as illness, medical or dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies, religious holidays or other unavoidable cause (you may be asked to provide evidence for your child before this can be authorised).

The school recognises that there may be times where children of different faiths observe religious festivals that fall outside of school holidays and weekends, in these cases only the headteacher can decide to authorise the absence. The request for an authorised must be submitted in advance.

Examples of authorised absence.

- An absence is authorised when parents tell us an allowable reason for being away from school. Allowable reasons include:
 - being too unwell to come to school;
 - emergency medical or dental appointments;
 - religious events, when one day each year will be authorised;
 - visits to another school, tests or exams;
 - any other 'exceptional circumstances', explained below.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no 'leave' has been given. This type of absence can lead to the Local Authority using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. This may include:

- parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily e.g. because they had a late night or for non-infectious illness or injury that would not affect their ability to learn.
- absences which have never been properly explained

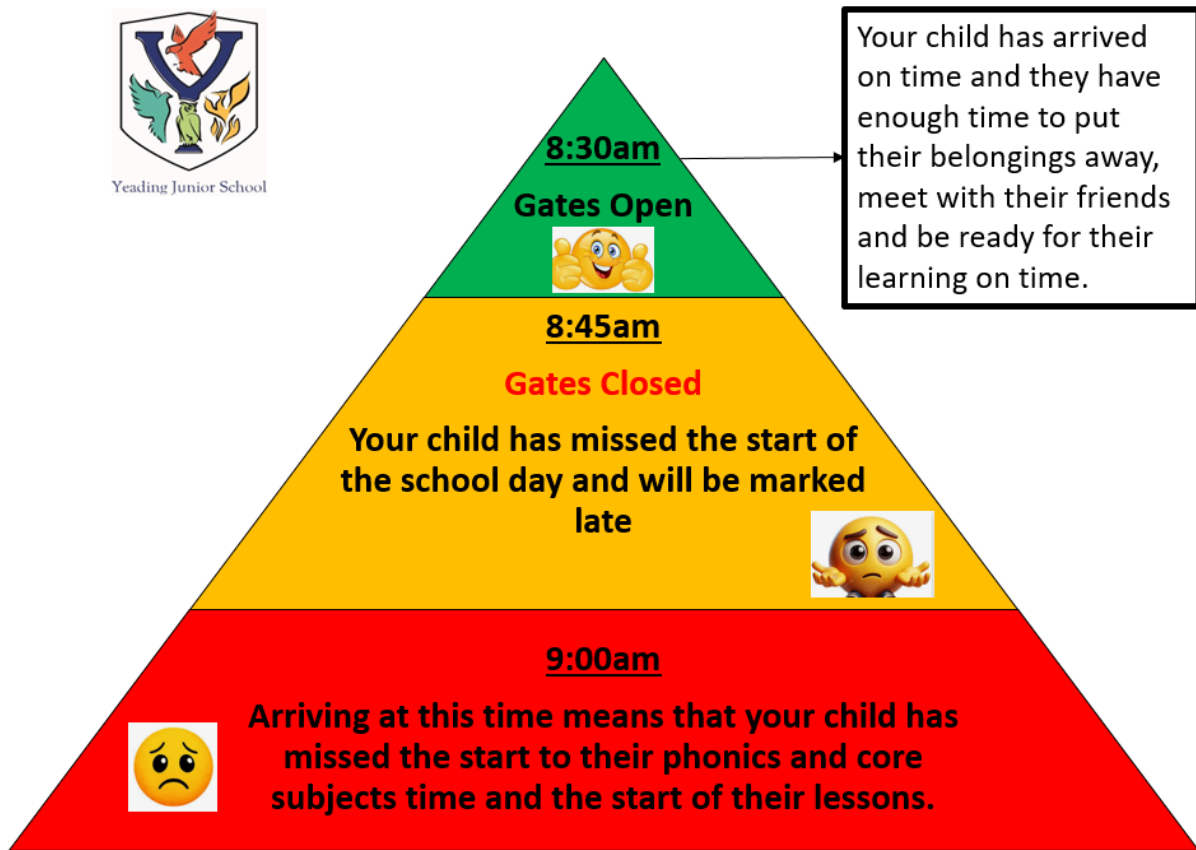
- children who arrive at school after the close of registration are marked using a 'U'. This indicates that they are in school for safeguarding purposes however is recorded as an absence for the session.
- looking after other children or children accompanying siblings or parents to medical appointments
- their own or family birthdays
- holidays taken during term time without leave, not deemed 'for exceptional purposes' by the headteacher- may result in school applying to the local authority to issue a penalty notice or if you have previously been issued a Penalty Notice, the school may request a direct prosecution by the local authority.
- day trips
- repeated or persistent non-specific illness, for example, 'poorly/unwell',
- absence of other siblings if one child is ill,
- absence because a parent is ill,
- oversleeping,
- inadequate clothing/uniform,
- confusion over school term and holiday dates,
- medical and/or dental appointments of more than half a day without very good reason,
- child's and/or family birthdays,
- any routine family event or trip, for example, shopping.
- where the reason for absence is given as illness and occurs either side of a school holiday, medical proof will be sought. Without this proof the absence will not be authorised.
- other leave of absence in term time which has not been agreed

Contact Details - Telephone numbers

There are times when the school needs to contact parents about lots of things, including absence, so we need to have current contact numbers at all times. Parents should ensure the school is informed of any changes.

Lateness

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If a child misses the start of the day they can miss work and not spend time with their class teacher getting vital information and news for the day. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons, can be embarrassing for the child, affecting their self-esteem and wellbeing and can also encourage further absence. Good time-keeping is a vital life skill which will help our children as they progress through their school life and out into the wider world. Any child arriving late before registers close will be recorded as L. Any child arriving late after register close will be recorded as U - this is unauthorised absence.



How we manage lateness:

The school day starts at *8.35am* when children can begin to come into school. Registers are taken at *8.45am* and your child will receive a late mark 'L' if they are not in by that time. Children arriving after *8.45am* are required to come in to school via the school office if accompanied by a parent or career and will sign them in and provide a reason for their lateness which is recorded.

At *9am registers will be closed*. In accordance with the Regulations, if your child arrives after that time they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site, but this will **not** count as a present mark and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence. This may mean that you could face the possibility of being issued with a Penalty Notice if the problem persists.

If your child has a persistent late record you will be asked to meet with the Deputy Headteacher and /or the Attendance Officer, but you can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time. We expect parents and staff to encourage good punctuality by being good role models to our children and celebrate good class and individual punctuality.

If leave of absence is authorised, the school will not provide work for children to do during their absence. Parents are however advised to read with their children and encourage them to write a diary while they are away.

Welcome to



Did you know...?

In a school year, if your child is late every day by...	Your child would have lost approximately....	or they would have missed approximately...
5 Minutes	3.5 days from school	20 lessons
10 Minutes	7 days from school	41 lessons
15 Minutes	10 days from school	55 lessons
20 Minutes	14.5 days from school	82 lessons
30 Minutes	22 days from school	123 lessons

Getting your child to school really matters
Remember absence = Lost learning opportunity

Yeadon Junior School

Exceptional Leave

There is no longer any entitlement in law for pupils to take time off during the term to go on holiday. In addition, the Supreme Court has ruled that the definition of regular school attendance is "in accordance with the rules prescribed by the school".

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 were amended in September 2013. All references to family holidays and extended leave have been removed. The amendments specify that headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are "exceptional circumstances" and they no longer have the discretion to authorise up to ten days of absence each academic year.

It is a rule of this school that a leave of absence shall not be granted in term time unless there are reasons considered to be exceptional by the headteacher, irrespective of the child's overall attendance. Only the headteacher may authorise such a request and all applications for a leave of absence must be made in writing to the school. Where a parent removes a child when the application for leave was refused or where no application was made to the school, the issue of a penalty notice may be requested by the Attendance Support team.

Whilst any child may occasionally have time off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child. If a parent thinks their child is reluctant to attend school then we will work with that family to understand the root problem and provide any necessary support.

Exceptional circumstances

This information seeks to help clarify the meaning of 'exceptional circumstances' and outline some guiding principles to aid the headteacher's decision-making process while giving parents a consistent and fair approach to requests for any term-time absence.

The fundamental principles for defining 'exceptional circumstances' are that they are 'rare, significant, unavoidable and short'.

Guiding principles

- Term times are for education. This is the priority. Children and families have 180 days off school to spend time together, including weekends and school holidays. The headteacher will rightly prioritise attendance. The default school policy is that absences will not be granted during term time and will only be authorised in exceptional circumstances.
- The decision to authorise a pupil's absence is at the headteacher's discretion based on their assessment and merits of each request.
- If an event can be reasonably scheduled outside of term time then it would not be normal to authorise absence for such an event, for example:
- holidays or other travel, including as a result of parental work commitments, are therefore not considered 'exceptional circumstances';
- leave which is taken because of the availability of cheaper fares or other costs are not regarded as exceptional circumstances;
- claims of illness as a reason for a delayed return, particularly after normal school holidays will not be considered unless accompanied by travel tickets dated before the school opens or other agreed dates. Medical documentation from abroad will not normally be accepted unless accompanied by travel documents indicating travel dates prior to school reopening.
- Absences to visit seriously-ill relatives or for a bereavement of a close family member are usually considered to amount to 'exceptional circumstances', but for the funeral service and travelling time only, not for extended leave. Absence will only be authorised if the headteacher is satisfied that the circumstances are truly exceptional.
- Absences to attend parents' own wedding may be exceptional if the headteacher is satisfied that there is a persuasive reason for holding the wedding during term time and there will be an onus on parents to show clear evidence that this absence is absolutely an exceptional circumstance. In difficult family situations the headteacher may use his discretion in granting leave and each case should be addressed on its individual merits, taking into account the overall welfare of the child.
- Absences for important religious observances are often taken into account, but only for the ceremony and travelling time, again, not for extended leave. This is intended for one-off situations rather than regular or recurring events.
- The needs of the families of service personnel will be taken into account if they are returning from long operational tours that prevent contact during scheduled holiday time.
- Reasonable adjustments for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities will be made and may result in a leave being granted as an exceptional circumstance.
- Families may need time together to recover from a trauma or crisis, including where an absence from school is recommended by a health professional as part of a parent or child's rehabilitation from a medical or emotional issue.

When making absence-related decisions, the headteacher will consider:

- a pupil's record of attendance for the current and previous academic years;
- time of absence being taken in the school year. If the request is made to extend the beginning or end of a school holiday period, it is unlikely to be considered exceptional.
- The headteacher can determine the length of the authorised absence as well as whether a particular absence is authorised.

The following factors may also help the headteacher to reach a decision:

- number of school days being missed;
- any exceptional term-time leave requested and/or taken in previous academic years for a similar purpose;
- whether alternative care arrangements been considered by the parent to limit the time away from school;

- impact on any interventions, assessments or referrals being undertaken with the child or family, for example, family support, social care assessments, CAMHS, SEN;
- the potential impact that the absence will have on the child;
- whether the absence falls within any key stage national tests or exams.

How to tell us about exceptional circumstances:

- A parent should complete an application form for term-time leave in good time. The parent with whom the pupil normally resides must make the application.
- Leave may only be granted where proper procedures have been followed and the permission given.
- Tickets and/or other travel arrangements should not be booked prior to discussion with and agreement of the school.
- Parents should not confuse telling the school with having permission.
- Where the school and the parents fail to reach an agreement and the child is then absent from school the absence will be marked as unauthorised. Unauthorised absences are an offence and can be liable to legal action or a fixed penalty fine.
- Extended absences may put your child's school place at risk.
- In the event of an emergency when you have to take leave urgently, taking children, then you should inform the school or have the school informed immediately. Leave of absence cannot be granted retrospectively and evidence other than your word may be asked for.

Our school values of integrity, resilience and teamwork, alongside our rule of readiness and respect underpin all interactions with all parents, carers and pupils in relation to absence.

Performance Licences

The applicant for a Performance Licence (usually the production company or theatrical agent) is obliged to seek the view of the school when applying for an absence request. Such a request will only be considered by the school when the child's attendance is at least 90% and the child is making at least expected levels of progress. A request may be declined if either of these thresholds is not met or if the timing of the requested absence could be detrimental to the child's education.

Deletion from Roll

For any pupil leaving Yeading Junior School, other than at the end of year 6 leaving for secondary school parents/carers are required to complete a 'Pupils moving from school' form which can be obtained from the school office. This provides the school with the following information: Child's name, class, current address, date of leaving, new home address, name of new school, address of new school. This information is essential to ensure that we know and safeguard the whereabouts of all our pupils. In such cases, the Attendance Support Team should be notified.

Children Missing Education

In Children Missing Education - Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities (2016), children missing education are defined as those who are on a school roll or not receiving suitable education otherwise than at school. Those who are regularly absent or have missed 10 school days or more without permission may be at risk of becoming 'children missing education'.

There will not always be a [safeguarding](#) concern for children and young people who are missing education. Most children and young people are moving schools supported by their parents/carers, schools and local

authority admissions services. A smaller number, however, are at risk of dropping out or disengaging from education and being out of school, they are at risk of exploitation, going missing and significant harm.

As a result of daily registration, schools are particularly well placed to notice when a child has gone missing. If a member of the school becomes aware that a child may have run away or gone missing, they should try to establish with the parents/carers what has happened. If this is not possible, or the child is missing, the designated safeguarding lead//advisor should, together with the class teacher, assess the child's vulnerability.

In the circumstances of a child going missing who is not known to any other agencies, the headteacher should inform the Children Missing Education (CME) Officer of any child who has not attended for 10 consecutive school days without provision of reasonable explanation. Prior to doing so, the school will make enquiries to ascertain whether the child is still residing at the home address and is not attending or whether the child is missing.

The School Attendance Support Team

Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the school may refer the child to the Attendance Support Officer from the Local Authority. He/she will also try to resolve the situation by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed and unauthorised absences persist, these Officers can use sanctions such as Penalty Notices (currently £80 rising to £160 if unpaid after 21 days. If unpaid after 28 days a summons to Court will be issued for each unpaid Penalty Notice) or prosecutions in the Magistrates Court. The legislation is the Education Act 1996 sec. 444(1) and 444(1A). See Appendix 1 for Hillingdon Council Fact file on penalty notices.

"If any child of compulsory school age who is a registered pupil at a school fails to attend regularly at the school, his/her parent is guilty of an offence."

Alternatively, parents or children may wish to contact Attendance Support themselves to ask for help or information. They are independent of the school and will give impartial advice. Their telephone number is 01895 250858 or attendancesupport@hillingdon.gov.uk

Equal Opportunities

That every member of the school community experiences equal chances, irrespective of ethnic origin, race, religion, colour, nationality, political beliefs, disability, age, sex or sexual orientation.

That every member of the school community is valued as an individual and that everyone understands that stereotyping, discrimination, prejudice and racism will not be tolerated.

Summary

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures & its Attendance Policy to parents and to promote attendance. School attendance data must be available to the Local Authority & the Department for Education.

Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend.

All school staff are committed to working with parents and pupils as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.

Regular attendance supports optimising your child's attainment.

Attendance Lead:

Staff consulted: Mr Hall, Mr Melmoth, Mrs El Awel, Mrs Mirza, Mrs Iwobi

Ratified by the Governing Body: March 2026

Review Date: March 2027

Penalty notices for non-attendance at school

Advice for all parents and carers of children attending Hillingdon schools



School attendance and the law
Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2024 gives powers to Hillingdon Council to issue penalty notices where a parent/carer is considered capable of, but is unwilling to, secure an improvement in their child's school attendance.

Why is intervention necessary?

Increasing school attendance is a key priority nationally and locally because missing school damages a pupil's achievement chances, disrupts school routines and the learning of others and can leave a pupil vulnerable to anti-social behaviour and youth crime.

Above all, missing school seriously affects children's longer term life opportunities.

What is a penalty notice?

Under existing legislation, parents/carers commit an offence if a child fails to attend regularly and the absences are unauthorised by school.

Depending on circumstances such cases may result in prosecution under section 444 of the education act 1996.

A penalty notice is an alternative to prosecution which does not require an appearance in court whilst still seeking to secure an improvement in a pupil's attendance.

Payment of a penalty notice enables parents to discharge potential liability for conviction.

A child would need to have missed 10 sessions of school in a 10 week period and the absence would need to be recorded as unauthorised. The 10 week period can span two terms. Only two penalty notices can be issued per child, per parent in the space of three academic years.

What are the costs?

First penalty notices are £160, reduced to £80 if paid within the first 21 days. There is a total time of 28 days to make payment. Penalty notices are issued per parent, per child and posted to your home address.

Second penalty notices are charged at £160 per parent, per child to be paid within 28 days.

Two penalty notices for non-attendance at school.

When are they used?

Hillingdon considers regular attendance at school is of such importance that penalty notices may be used in a range of situations where unauthorised absence occurs:

- Overt truancy (including pupils found during truancy sweeps)
- Parental condoned absence
- Leave during term time that school know or suspect is due to a family holiday being taken during the school term. Headteachers have discretion to consider exceptional leave and look at each case on its personal merit
- Persistent late arrival at school (after the register has closed)
- All pupils who are suspended or permanently excluded from school are required not to be in a public place, during school hours, without justification. This includes being accompanied by their parents.

In every case (except exclusion) a pupil will have had a minimum of 10 school sessions (i.e. five school days) lost to unauthorised absence before a penalty notice is considered.

The authority never takes such action lightly and would far rather work with parents/carers to improve attendance without having to resort to any enforcement actions.

Is a warning given?

A notice to improve is sent to parents before legal action is taken to give a final opportunity to work with the school to improve school attendance. This is not in every case, such as a holiday taken during term time where a notice to improve would not be applicable.

You are responsible for knowing the whereabouts of your child and their school attendance.

Is there an appeal process?

There is no statutory right of appeal once a notice has been issued, but on receipt of a warning you can make representation should you wish in writing to attendancesupport@hillingdon.gov.uk. Representations cannot be made over the phone.

You will need to outline error occurred with the process of issuing. The local authority decision is final in all penalty notice situations.

How do I pay?

Details of payment arrangements will be included on the penalty notice. You need to be aware that payment in part or by instalment is not an option with penalty notices.

What happens if I do not pay?

You have up to 28 days from the date of issue to pay the penalty notice in full, after which the authority is required under the act to commence proceedings in the magistrates' court for the original offence of poor attendance by your child.

If proven, this can attract a range of fines up to £2,500 and/or parenting orders, community sentences or custody, depending upon circumstances.

Can I be prosecuted if I pay the penalty notice but my child is still missing school?

Not for the period included in the penalty notice – payment discharges your liability in this respect. However it may be the case that a prosecution might be considered for further periods of poor attendance not covered by the notice, depending upon the circumstances. In that case, it is vital you work closely with your child's school and support agencies such as the Attendance Support team.

Can I get help if my child is not attending regularly?

Yes, the local authority and your child's school will give you advice if you need help to secure an improvement in your child's attendance.

It is very important you speak with the school or with the Attendance Support team at the earliest opportunity if you have any worries at all about securing your child's attendance.

You will be given the support required and agreed, either in an informal or a formal plan which will be reviewed at three weekly intervals.

For more information

📧 Attendance Support team,
Hillingdon Council, 4E/09 Civic Centre,
High Street, Uxbridge, UB8 1UW

☎ 01895 250858

✉ attendancesupport@hillingdon.gov.uk

Attendance Process Flowchart - Formal interventions that are to be held by the school

